

Pensacola News Journal (FL)
December 16, 2004

Rebuilding Pensacola naval air station Ivan's \$650 million price tag will help build NAS' s future

By Brett Norman

In the wake of Hurricane Ivan, the Navy likely will demolish 40 historic buildings at Pensacola Naval Air Station but will use \$650 million in federal reconstruction money to prepare the **base** for the Navy's needs in 2030, the **base** commander said Wednesday.

Capt. John M. Pruitt said the massive investment bodes well for how local **bases** will fare with the 2005 **Base Realignment and Closure** Commission, but he recommended the community remain vigilant.

"Lots of data is being collected and there are tons of scenarios," he said, after joking that the process was way above his pay grade. "There may be some things that get shifted around, but I feel personally confident that NAS will stand on its own merit. I expect it will be a vital place for a long time to come."

Speaking to about 40 people at New World Landing in downtown Pensacola for the Gulf Coast Economics Club's monthly luncheon, Pruitt said plans to relocate the Naval School of Aviation Safety from Monterey, Calif. to Pensacola are proceeding.

Repairs to Chevalier Hall, which houses the Naval Air Technical Training Center's classrooms and is the second largest building in the state, will be finished next month.

But with the reconstruction, comes demolition.

Base officials will eliminate hundreds of thousands of square feet of underutilized building space, Pruitt said. About 40 of the historic, waterfront buildings have been recommended for demolition, including the old power plant.

"An axiom of Ivan: old and near the water equals heavy damage. We're going to remember that," he said. "Even though these buildings will go away, we will remember the people who made them."

The goal of reconstruction is to build a Navy **base** for 2030, he said.

After Pruitt's speech, Jerry Dickerson thanked him for efforts to help the broader community while dealing with the extensive devastation on **base**.

Dickerson, a retired Naval reservist who is chairman of government affairs for the American Red Cross of Northwest Florida, said young sailors and Marines provided indispensable help at some of the largest hurricane shelters, such as the Pensacola Civic Center, University of West Florida and Bailey Middle School.

"The amount of talent they have is incredible," he said. "It's the people who make the difference."

Boston Globe
December 17, 2004

\$18M Pledge Aims To Save Natick Army Lab

By Benjamin Gedan, Globe Correspondent

NATICK -- Governor Mitt Romney pledged \$18 million yesterday to expand the US Army's laboratory here, part of an aggressive spending strategy to persuade the Pentagon to spare two Bay State military installations in the upcoming base closure process.

The \$18 million, the first sizable grant the state has given the facility, would add 110,000 square feet of research space and create 200 jobs in Natick, according to Romney and other base supporters. Romney also has promised \$241 million to improve Hanscom Air Force Base, the other base the state's political leaders are trying to save.

Formally called the US Army Soldier Systems Center, the 78-acre site is the only Army facility in the United States developing high tech clothing, shelter, food, and parachute equipment for the military, said Jerry Whitaker, an Army spokesman. Natick Labs, as the facility is called locally, has 2,000 employees.

"There is a dramatic potential for job increase," said US Representative Edward J. Markey, Democrat of Malden, who toured the lab yesterday with Senator Edward M. Kennedy and General Benjamin Griffin, commander of the US Army Materiel Command.

Romney submitted the Natick expansion proposal to Pentagon officials in Washington on Wednesday. Romney, Kennedy, and other officials have been trying to build a case to keep the Hanscom and Natick bases open by promising to expand the facilities. However, a defense department official has said the state's spending promises would not factor into decisions on base closings.

Early next year, a nine-member federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission will be formed. In May, the commission will consider base closings suggested by the secretary of defense. Four months later, it will submit base closure recommendations to the president. The Pentagon hopes to cut as much as one-fourth of its military base capacity by next year.

The closure process is likely to spark an intense lobbying campaign by politicians across the nation, trying to save their hometown bases. Romney downplayed his personal ties to President Bush yesterday, saying military base closings were not a "political process."

Advocates say the planned improvements would increase the military value of the facilities, a key consideration for Pentagon officials.

Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan wear body armor designed in Natick to be lighter and stronger than the body armor used in Vietnam. Troops fighting overseas today dine on 24 different MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) -- including New England clam chowder and Mexican macaroni and cheese entrees that were researched and designed at Natick. "These improve the mission," said Cort C. Boulanger, vice president of the Massachusetts High Technology Council, which is lobbying to save the facility.

Natick Labs is far smaller than Hanscom, which employs 4,200 military and civilian personnel. But the Natick facility supplies several military branches.

The lab receives \$1.2 billion in federal funds annually, including a \$10 million increase since 2001, Markey said. It spends \$135 million in the regional economy on salaries, utilities, and contracts.

"The Natick labs are absolutely essential to our national security," Kennedy said yesterday. Most employees, civilian and military, could be transferred if the facility closed. But the loss would hurt area schools, like the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, that work with the lab on federally funded projects, as well as engineering graduates of Tufts, Harvard, and MIT who find work there, Markey said.

Public officials in Boston's western suburbs and the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce are also lobbying to protect Natick Labs, which operates 124 buildings on Lake Cochituate and around the region.

"The labs play a major role in the regional economy," said Natick Town Administrator Philip E. Lemnios. "The labs draw upon the university system and private sector." Griffin toured the labs yesterday, but he had no response to the improvement plan or the facility's possible closure.

He said he had met twice with Kennedy and other representatives to discuss Hanscom and Natick Labs, which were nearly shuttered in the mid-1990s.

There are several Army research facilities nationwide, including the US Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command, which is developing weapons in New Jersey.

"There's going to be a lot of competition around the country," Markey said. But he said the research and infrastructure in Natick are unique. And transferring equipment and expertise, he said in an interview, would erase any savings from closing the base. Yesterday, Romney also praised the labs, complimenting Griffin's new Advanced Combat Uniform, designed locally, at a press conference as the general stood in silence. "This is the new look," Romney said. "It can be worn in the desert."

San Antonio Express-News (TX)
December 17, 2004

**Cornyn takes a close-up look at the election process
Armed Services Committee members take tour, get briefings.**

By Gary Martin; EXPRESS-NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

Iraqi elections are on track despite repeated attacks and violence by insurgents aiming to derail the voting for a general assembly to run the war-torn nation, Sen. John Cornyn, one of several U.S. lawmakers touring the country, said Thursday.

"Postponing the elections would only reward the insurgents, whose goal is chaos, not democracy," Cornyn, R-Texas, told the San Antonio Express-News in an e-mail exchange.

Cornyn, in Brussels, Belgium, after a visit to Iraqi cities, said the United States' "resolve to finish the job has never been more important to the future of Iraq."

"Those elections are on track," Cornyn said.

Cornyn was in Iraq just one day before Iraqi rebels struck across Baghdad, killing five people in attacks.

Insurgents are stepping up their campaign to halt the Jan. 30 election for the National Assembly, one of three elections scheduled in Iraq next year.

Militants trying to fuel a civil war between Shiites and the minority Sunnis led to an attack earlier this week on one of Shia Islam's holiest shrines, according to news reports. Eight died in that violence.

The White House warned Thursday that violence would continue as the election nears.

"There are still some remnants of the Saddam Hussein regime, and there are terrorists who have entered the country who are doing everything they can to derail the transition to democracy," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said.

"They recognize how high the stakes are," McClellan said. "The elections coming up in January are a step toward a democratic and peaceful Iraq."

A delegation of lawmakers on the Senate Armed Services Committee was in Iraq this week as the campaign for the 275-member assembly began.

The senators will return Saturday after visiting NATO headquarters in Brussels.

The U.S. delegation is led by Sen. John Warner, R-Va., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., the ranking Democrat on the panel.

Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., and Cornyn, both committee members, also were on the trip that included briefings with U.S. military staff and a meeting with John Negroponte, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq.

After those briefings, Cornyn said the United Nations is providing technical assistance to the Iraqi people to help them prepare for the election, which has come under continued threat of violence waged by religious factions within the country.

"The biggest concern leading up to the election is the security environment," he said.

The senator said U.S. troops "are doing an outstanding job, as they continue their job of putting down the insurgency."

Meanwhile, the Senate delegation also was looking into reports that U.S. troops lacked the armament and protection needed to carry out the mission in Iraq.

"We absolutely have a moral obligation to make sure that they have everything that they possibly need," Cornyn said.

The senator noted the Red River Army Depot near Texarkana is producing the armor kits used to improve protection on military vehicles that have been targeted by insurgents.

Red River Army Depot, considered vulnerable to the **base closure** process, is running at capacity to provide the armor kits and prepare vehicles being shipped overseas.

Another Texas installation, the Corpus Christi Army Depot, which repairs and upgrades helicopters, is also running near capacity.

In the e-mail, Cornyn said Texas **bases** are playing an important role in providing "our troops with the tools they need to get the job done. That's why Corpus Christi depot and Red River depot are so important to our success in Iraq."

The Pentagon and the Bush administration were embarrassed last week when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, meeting with troops in Kuwait, was grilled by soldiers who complained that they lacked the proper equipment and protection.

Spc. Thomas Wilson, a Tennessee guardsman, told Rumsfeld that soldiers were scavenging landfills to find armor and parts.

Wilson's complaint led Democrats and Republicans in Congress to voice outrage that the Pentagon had failed to provide protection for troops.

Cornyn said he, too, was concerned about the reports of insufficient armor to protect U.S. troops.

"We have an obligation to those who put themselves in harm's way to protect us," Cornyn said.

San Bernardino County Sun
December 20, 2004

**Barstow readies for battle
U.S. to close more military bases in 2005**

By CHUCK MUELLER
Staff Writer

BARSTOW - Bracing for the next round of military base closures in the new year, civic leaders in this military town are preparing battle plans to ensure the once-targeted Marine Corps Logistics Base stays open.

The City Council has commissioned a special report on the role of the Marine base in a changing military, said Patricia Morris, assistant to the city manager.

Meanwhile, a newly created California Council on Base Support and Retention plans a series of meetings next month to advise community leaders on strategies to take to retain the state's military installations.

The sessions are scheduled for Jan. 6 in Sacramento, Jan. 10 in Lancaster, Jan. 12 in Los Angeles and Jan. 13 in San Diego.

Barstow's 62-year-old Marine supply and maintenance base dodged the bullet twice in Defense Department decisions to close many of the nation's military forts and bases, but it could be targeted again next year in the next round of closures.

The U.S. Department of Defense is looking at additional cuts of about 25 percent in 2005 to save \$7 billion annually. It reduced operational costs by \$16.7 billion by closing or realigning 20 percent of its bases between 1988 and 2001 - including three in the Inland Empire.

In a fast-changing world, the Pentagon must divest itself of unnecessary military installations and put the savings into new weapons to improve the military's fighting capabilities, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a report on the closure and realignment program.

Defense officials say the Pentagon has a 25 percent excess of bases nationwide, and that impedes military efficiency and war-fighting capabilities.

"The Department of Defense has stressed the (closure) round in 2005 will not only remove excess installation capacity, but will enable a new concept called transformation," Morris said.

"Transformation is a series of goals, processes and dynamics ..., to fundamentally change the way U.S. military forces fight, (and) are organized, trained and supplied."

On Oct. 6, Barstow council members hired two consultants with the Public/Private Solutions Group Inc. to prepare a report on the role of the Marine Corps Logistics Base, which will be presented to the Defense Department.

“It will be a background paper on how the base relates to the concept of Defense Department transformation,” Morris said. “We expect to receive the report early next month.”

Meanwhile, the 18-member California Council on Base Support and Retention, spearheaded by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, will take a look at the role of all of the state's military installations.

Officials are expected to focus on the interrelationship of the bases and how their closure or reduced mission could jeopardize the mission of all the installations.

The federal closure commission will examine all military installations in the United States and its territories. But Fort Irwin, near Barstow, is not likely to be included in the 2005 round of closures in view of its stature as the Army's premier training post. Likewise, the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center near Twentynine Palms probably will not be targeted.

“Both Fort Irwin and the Marine Corps Logistics Base are important to Barstow's economy,” said Lawrence Dale, the city's mayor. “They are among our major employers, and the loss of either would have a significant impact on Barstow.”

“We will do everything we can to ensure that our bases are kept open and continue to operate as they are.”

Combined, Fort Irwin and the Marine base account for 40 percent of the Barstow area's economic base.

The fort's economic impact is significant, with more than \$500 million going back into the region each year. That total includes a payroll of \$168 million for the fort's 5,342 military personnel and \$22 million for its 3,565 civilian employees. Annual contracts total \$160 million.

The Marine base pours \$132 million annually into the regional economy, including \$79 million of payroll.

“Its total employment, over 1,600, is huge when you consider that nonbase jobs in Barstow are less than 9,000,” Morris said.

While the base was not marked for closure in four previous rounds, some repair work on Hawk missiles was moved in 1993 to an East Coast Army depot, resulting in reassignment of some local workers.

In 1995, the base was not listed initially for closure or realignment but later was added, surveyed and removed after a base closure commissioner inspected it.

In 2005, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission will focus mainly on the military value of an installation and its impact on the operational readiness of America's military, Rumsfeld said.

He will send his recommendations to the base closure commission by May 16. Commissioners will forward their report by Sept. 8 to the president, who will have 15 days to accept or reject the recommendations.

If accepted, Congress will have 45 days to reject the recommendations.

In previous closure rounds, the Defense Department shut down George and Norton Air Force Bases in San

Bernardino County and restructured March Air Force Base near Riverside as an Air Force Reserve Base.

With the closure of George AFB in 1992, more than 4,800 military and 506 civilian jobs were lost. The base has been transformed into Southern California Logistics Airport, which now employs nearly 2,000 in a variety of aviation-related jobs.

Norton AFB employed more than 10,400 people when it closed in 1994, plus nearly 15,000 indirect jobs. It now operates as San Bernardino International Airport.

El Paso Times (TX)
December 20, 2004

Area well-poised as BRAC moves ahead

By Diana Washington Valdez

El Paso community leaders say they are confident the region has done its best to defend Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range and Holloman Air Force Base against any negative actions from the next round of Base Realignment and Closure recommendations due in 2005.

Under the BRAC timeline, President Bush will nominate nine commissioners in March who will review the Defense Department's recommendations for base realignments and closures. The commission will present its own recommendations to Bush later in 2005.

Retired Maj. Gen. James Maloney, a former Fort Bliss commander; U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-Texas; and state Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso, have played key roles in coordinating regional efforts to keep the Army post and neighboring installations intact.

"This is an effort that began when I was first elected to Congress in 1997," Reyes said. "By reaching out to and combining efforts with my New Mexico and Texas colleagues ... the strength of our military assets has improved exponentially.

"I am proud of how this coalition has grown and the steps we have taken over the past years to ensure that the Department of Defense is fully aware of the importance of our military bases to both our local economies and our national security."

Congress will have the final say on which military installations will be affected. Once a base is placed on the list for recommended closure or realignment, it cannot be removed. A Defense Department report said 25 percent of the military's bases must be reduced or realigned.

Richard Dayoub, president of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, said, "We should not take anything for granted in this process."

But he praised the effort so far. "I've never seen a more coalesced effort, a true partnership in our region, in preparation for" BRAC.

Dayoub said he believes the region can support a considerable influx of soldiers, who will need housing and health care, and schools for their children.

Fort Bliss is set to get an additional 3,800 soldiers late next year, a growth of about a third of the post's size with a potential annual economic impact of \$524 million.

The move is not related to BRAC, and Maloney, who serves on the state's Texas Military Preparedness Commission, said the region's three installations can accommodate "a division-size or air wing unit." An Army division has 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers.

"We must be cognizant that this is a political process, and we have to stay attentive to it," Maloney said. "The stars are aligned right. If logic prevails, we stand to see significant growth at Fort Bliss."

The state delegation plans to make at least one more trip to Washington, D.C., "to schmooze with the lawmakers," officials said, adding that Texans will mention Fort Bliss and Fort Hood.

The BRAC process will affect jobs and military spending in communities. In previous rounds of BRAC, military value was the primary consideration. This time, military value is not required to be the most important factor.

Maloney notes that Fort Bliss, White Sands and Holloman combined make up an area nearly the size of Connecticut, have the Defense Department's largest controlled air space, represent a place where every Army weapon system can be fired, and have the 10th-longest runway in the United States.

Holloman is home to an Air Force unit of stealth fighters, and White Sands was used to test the atom bomb.

Maloney also notes that the bases have a supportive community that values the military installations.

The networking, teamwork and visible community support have paid off, Maloney said.

Shapleigh, chairman of the state Senate Committee on Base Realignment and Closure, wrote the legislation for the \$250 million Texas Military Value Fund designed to help communities upgrade the value of their bases.

"For over a year, we have put together one of the best regional efforts in Texas," Shapleigh said. "We have delivered a clear and consistent message that Fort Bliss, White Sands and Holloman is a crown jewel of the Department of Defense. We have anticipated questions, needs and crafted the best response possible. I know of nothing more we can do to improve our opportunities."

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, has pointed out that less than 10 years ago Fort Bliss was vulnerable but that the post has made many improvements.

She said the Senate subcommittees on which she serves have obtained millions of dollar for Texas bases, including Fort Bliss.

Mindful of the impact BRAC would have on Texas, Gov. Rick Perry promised the Defense Department the state would spend \$36 million for infrastructure if the military sends more troops to Fort Bliss and Fort Hood.

Picayune Item (MI)
December 18, 2004

Mississippi officials hope state escapes base closures

JACKSON (AP) - The threat of economic losses and other nasty side-effects that will accompany the closing of up to 100 of the nation's 425 military bases next year has officials working overtime to keep Mississippi's facilities intact.

U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran, taking part in The Associated Press's newsmaker series at the Jackson bureau, said he is confident Mississippi will keep its bases. He warned, however, there are no certainties and two of the military facilities - Naval Station Pascagoula and Meridian Naval Air Station - need special attention.

"I'm convinced that we have a good chance of keeping any of our bases from being closed," the Republican lawmaker said in the recent interview. "But I don't know what the administration is going to recommend."

Other officials say there is reason for concern among the nine military communities.

"We have an enormous hurdle facing us next year," Gov. Haley Barbour said in an interview. "If the Defense Department is successful in closing 25 percent of the bases, we're going to have very, very, very serious challenges."

Mississippi's bases employ more than 35,000 civilian and military workers with an annual payroll of nearly \$1.5 billion.

The economic impact is far greater in Biloxi, where Keesler Air Force Base officials estimate that more than 10,500 military retirees live within 50 miles of the base and another 31,000 live just outside that area.

In January, Barbour reauthorized the Mississippi Military Community Council, established in 1995 to prepare for that year's BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure), to help prepare communities for the next round.

Cochran said it might not be a good sign that some of the state's bases - Columbus Air Force Base, Naval Station Pascagoula and Meridian Naval Air Station - have made the BRAC list in the past. He warned, with at least one major political figure setting his sights on Meridian Naval Air Station, Mississippi's representatives in Washington could be facing a stiff fight.

Mississippi's congressional delegation touted the state's military installations in a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld earlier this month. The letter was signed by Cochran, Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., Reps. Bennie Thompson and Gene Taylor, both D-Miss., and Reps. Roger Wicker and Chip Pickering, both R-Miss. The letter pointed improvements made at the state's bases.

"We believe Department of Defense investment in Mississippi yields many advantages that may not be readily apparent to analysts focusing on individual installations," the letter said. "Mississippi has substantially invested in making infrastructure improvements designed to facilitate military training, mobilization and operations."

A community's economic dependence on a base and the improvements it makes, however, do not guarantee it will survive.

"I think it is a factor, but it does not outweigh the national security interest," said Cochran, the new chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "The military is here to protect the security of the country and if it's not serving that purpose then it needs to be changed."

Besides Meridian, Cochran said he is concerned about Naval Station Pascagoula because the port recently lost two major ships.

The USS Yorktown was decommissioned in December and the USS Ticonderoga was retired about a month earlier.

However, a positive for the state is that the U.S. Coast Guard is increasing its presence here, Cochran said.

"We are replacing, at least to some extent, the absent naval vessels with Coast Guard cutters," he said.

Barbour hopes widespread military activity in the state will reflect well on Mississippi.

Thousands of soldiers from across the country have been training at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg, which is one of two federally activated National Guard bases in the country.

"I think our relationship with the Department of Defense is extremely good," Barbour said. "But still, if a BRAC round results in 25 percent of the bases being closed, it would be virtually impossible for us to totally dodge a bullet."

Day, The (New London, CT)
December 17, 2004

How many submarines?

The fact that a classified Pentagon report favors the idea of maintaining a fleet of 45 to 50 submarines is encouraging to the coalition fighting to keep open the Navy's submarine **base** in Groton. But what is desirable and what the country can afford don't necessarily intersect in this case. The report points to a strong sentiment in the Defense Department to maintain a robust submarine presence, but the Navy has to measure this desire against its likely shipbuilding budgets, and the new Virginia class of submarines is costing, at more than \$2 billion a boat, more than anyone expected. Treading the line between these two points of view

is the authoritative outlook of Adm. Vern Clark, who favors a fleet of 40 submarines.

If that number prevails, it's the one that would be plugged into the 2005 **Base Closing and Realignment** considerations when the Pentagon prepares its recommendations. The Pentagon study skews the number on the safe side, which is cause for optimism around here.

The Groton **base** and Electric Boat's shipyard in Groton can survive with 40, but as Robert Hamilton, The Day's military reporter pointed out in an op-ed article Sunday, any dip below that figure over the 25-year period places the **base** in jeopardy, and by extension, EB. Weighing heavily on these considerations are the increasing costs of the conflict in Iraq, which is the 800-pound gorilla in the corner in all military acquisitions today and in the 2005 BRAC.

The higher numbers reflect the preference of theater commanders for the submarine, which can carry out a variety of intelligence and combat functions well. All the services appreciate the value of the submarine. But the thorny problem is fitting the Virginia-class subs into the budgets. Adm. Clark thinks a 40-submarine fleet can be maintained by extending the life of some older Los Angeles-class submarines, but the cost of refitting and refueling them might be prohibitively steep.

The Center for Defense Information suggests scrapping the program and developing a more affordable boat, but that idea doesn't take into account the hefty up-front costs of designing and bringing into production a new submarine. The Virginia, remember, was an attempt to replace its predecessor, the Seawolf, with a cheaper submarine. It didn't work that way.

Militating against weighing cost alone is the importance of maintaining the size submarine fleet the services need to protect the country and sustaining the industrial **base** to keep it afloat. The Navy must revisit whether dividing the work on new submarines between EB Northrop Grumman Newport News is the most cost-efficient way of doing that, or whether it is adding unnecessarily to the costs.

The national interest, apart from local economic interests, would seem to support maintaining two nuclear shipyards and the East Coast submarine **bases** and a fleet of at least 40 submarines. Budget fallout from the war in Iraq shouldn't force the Navy into making shortsighted decisions regarding that need. The problem will be finding the ingenuity to squeeze those imperatives into a budget containing many other competing needs.

This is the difficult task confronting, among others, Connecticut's congressional delegation.

The Clarion-Ledger (Jackson, MS)
December 21, 2004

Officials looking for ventures on island

- ☐ Shrinking presence of Navy causing significant economic impact

The Associated Press

PASCAGOULA — Officials are shopping for new missions for Singing River Island as the military continues to downsize Naval Station Pascagoula.

The reduced Navy presence is not tied to any decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, which in May will release a list of bases recommended for closure.

Officials said that with the loss of the Aegis cruisers Ticonderoga and Yorktown, both homeported here, the Naval Station's total economic impact has dropped from \$105 million to \$92 million. A third cruiser and its crew of 350 will be lost in mid-2006.

"Our Navy mission is systematically being diminished," said George Freeland, director of the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation.

There has been good news for the base. Two Coast Guard cutters, funded by the Department of Homeland Security, are to be based at the facility and are not within the commission's purview.

The foundation is searching for other military and private industries that can take the place of the Navy on Singing River Island.

"That may entail a level of military and/or homeland security functions. It might also entail a level of private industry," Freeland said. "We are working, almost on a daily basis, to pursue a redevelopment of the property."

With two Coast Guard cutters replacing two Navy cruisers, the base likely won't be closed. However, the cruisers had crews of 350, while the cutters are manned by 27 crew and officers.

Stennis Space Center will serve as the model for redevelopment on Singing River Island. With NASA's rocket motor-engine testing facility as its core, Stennis has attracted a Navy Special Boat Team and private contractors that add up to more than 2,100 civilian and military jobs.

[December 20, 2004 06:53 PM US Eastern Timezone](#)

Council on Base Support and Retention Announces Regional Public Forum Schedule

SACRAMENTO, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Dec. 20, 2004--The Council on Base Support and Retention announced the schedule today for six regional public forums it will conduct to hear from experts and community members on military base retention efforts.

"These forums give us the chance to hear directly from communities and gather the detailed information we need to strongly advocate for keeping California's bases open," said Council co-chair Leon Panetta.

The first forum will be held on January 6 in Sacramento, and five additional forums will be held throughout the state from January 10 through January 14. The forums provide the opportunity for community based organizations in each region to highlight their base retention work. A detailed schedule of the six forums is attached, as well as a list of the military installations that are relevant to each forum.

Parties interested in appearing before the Council must RSVP to the Office of Military and Aerospace Support, preferably at least three days prior to the forum. Email jstoulil@bth.ca.gov or call 916-323-5485.

"California is uniquely qualified to meet the needs of our transforming military, and the ideas and retention efforts shared at the forums will help California make the best case for its bases," said Council co-chair Donna Tuttle.

The Department of Defense is seeking to reduce its military infrastructure by 24 percent, and Governor Schwarzenegger created the Council to advise the state and local communities on base realignment and closure strategies. The 18-member Council is comprised of retired military officers and civic leaders.

Council on Base Support and Retention Regional Public Forum Schedule

Date/Location

January 6, 2005 Sacramento
 9:00 a.m. -- 5:00 p.m.
 CalEPA Building
 Coastal Hearing Room
 1001 I Street
 Sacramento, CA 95812

January 10, 2005 Lancaster
 9:00 a.m. -- 5:00 p.m.
 Lancaster City Hall
 44933 Fern Avenue
 Lancaster, CA 93534

January 12, 2005 Los Angeles
 8:00 a.m. -- 4:00 p.m.
 Hacienda Hotel
 Crystal Ballroom
 525 N. Sepulveda Boulevard
 El Segundo, CA 90245

January 13, 2005 Oceanside
 9:00 a.m. -- 12:00 p.m.
 Elks Hall
 444 Country Club Lane
 Oceanside, CA 82054

January 13, 2005 El Centro
 2:00 p.m. -- 5:00 p.m.
 Ryerson Hall
 225 Wake Avenue
 El Centro, CA 92243

January 14, 2005 San Diego
 9:00 a.m. -- 5:00 p.m.
 Port of San Diego
 Port Administration Building
 3165 Pacific Highway
 San Diego, CA 92101

Due to time constraints, each regional forum will discuss only bases and missions relevant to that area.

Military Installations to Be Discussed at Each Forum

Location	Military Installation
El Centro	Naval Air Facility El Centro
Lancaster	Fort Irwin (National Training Center)
Lancaster	Naval Air Station Lemoore
Lancaster	Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake
Lancaster	Air Force Plant 42
Lancaster	Edwards Air Force Base
Lancaster	March Air Reserve Base

Lancaster	Fresno Air National Guard Base (144th Fighter Wing)
Lancaster	Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunn. Range
Lancaster	Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (Twentynine Palms)
Lancaster	Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow
Lancaster	Defense Distribution Depot Barstow
Los Angeles	Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos
Los Angeles	Naval Base Ventura County (Pt.Mugu)
Los Angeles	Naval Construction Bat'l Center, Port Hueneme
Los Angeles	Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona Division
Los Angeles	Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach
Los Angeles	Los Angeles Air Force Base
Los Angeles	Vandenberg Air Force Base
Los Angeles	Channel Islands Air National Guard Station (146th Airlift Wing)
Oceanside	Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, Detachment Fallbrook
Oceanside	Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton
Sacramento	Presidio Of Monterrey/Defense Language Institute
Sacramento	Sierra Army Depot
Sacramento	Camp Parks Reserve Forces Training Area (Camp Parks)
Sacramento	Camp Roberts Military Training Area (MTA)
Sacramento	Fort Hunter Liggett
Sacramento	Naval Postgraduate School
Sacramento	Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, Detachment Concord
Sacramento	Beale Air Force Base
Sacramento	Onizuka Air Force Station
Sacramento	Travis Air Force Base
Sacramento	Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center
Sacramento	Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin (Sharpe & Tracy Depots)
Sacramento	Defense Finance and Accounting Service Center Seaside
San Diego	Fleet and Industrial Supply Center San Diego (tenant of Naval Station San Diego)
San Diego	Fleet Antisubmarine Warfare Training Center Pacific
San Diego	Naval Air Depot North Island
San Diego	Naval Air Station North Island
San Diego	Naval Amphibious Base Coronado
San Diego	Naval Base Point Loma
San Diego	Naval Facilities Engineering Command SW Division
San Diego	Naval Medical Center San Diego
San Diego	Naval Station San Diego
San Diego	Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center San Diego (SSC San Diego)
San Diego	Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR)
San Diego	Marine Corps Air Station Miramar
San Diego	Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego
San Diego	Defense Distribution Center San Diego

Grand Forks Herald (ND)
December 22, 2004

GFAFB: Tankers to move during runway work
Minot base among parking alternatives

By Mike Brue
Herald Staff Writer

Air Force officials are close to deciding where to park Grand Forks Air Force Base's 51 tankers for about half of 2005 during a \$27.5 million runway rebuilding project.

One option under consideration is to move the KC-135 aircraft to Minot Air Force Base, according to Grand Forks base spokesman Capt. Michael Meredith. But the Minot base is just one among several locations that could be used, he said. Planes have been moved to bases in Florida and elsewhere before.

The Air Force expects to announce its decision in January.

The intent also is to minimize the disruption on the 319th Air Refueling Wing's 2,700 active-duty personnel in Grand Forks.

"We're trying to find what's the best fit for the wing, and for the wing that might have to provide runway space ... It's a pretty complex equation," Meredith said Tuesday.

The Minot base is one of the Air Force's two domestic B-52 bases, but the base was used for tankers until the mid-1990s.

Big project

In March, the Air Force plans to close a 4,000-foot section of the Grand Forks base's 12,350-foot runway for repairs, which will allow the tanker mission to continue.

But sometime around May, construction will force the entire runway length to close, Meredith said. It tentatively would reopen in November.

The 51 tankers at Grand Forks Air Force Base provide midair refueling of other planes and also handle airlift operations.

The Grand Forks runway rebuild is the largest operations and maintenance project in the Air Force's 2004 fiscal year budget. Another \$26.2 million is budgeted to build 90 family housing units on base.

The Grand Forks runway was built in the late 1950s to accommodate military fighter jets, then widened in the 1960s when the base's mission emphasized B52 bombers. As a result, the runway's crown is off-center, Meredith said.

Several repair projects have helped maintain the aging runway, but it no longer complies with Air Force standards, he said.

The construction project will narrow the runway to 150 feet and re-center the crown. Except for the "touchdown zones" at each end of the runway, the concrete will be replaced by asphalt. Runway lighting also will be upgraded.

BRAC looms

The runway work comes as the federal government moves closer to deciding which bases to close or consolidate. Plans call for a Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, to be created in May, about the time Grand Forks Air Force Base will be emptied of airplanes. Inspections are part of the base review process.

The timing isn't perfect, said John Marshall, who heads the Grand Forks' Council on Military Relations, but the improvements are a substantial plus for Grand Forks Air Force Base. Given a choice, he said, "I'll take a brand-new one, even if I've got to wait a while."

"The BRAC committee will include all intelligent people, and they're going to know that there is a definite need for this runway," Marshall said. "(If) it's in the process of being built, there will be tankers there totally when it's completed, if not sooner."

"We're looking at it as a positive because it is an improvement to the base. It's an improvement to the mission for the future."

Texarkana Gazette
December 22, 2004

Cornyn lauds Red River work

By Aaron Brand

Following his recent trip to Iraq, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, is praising the local Red River Army Depot's production of armor kits.

"I was able to note the important contribution of the Red River Army Depot that provides up-armored kits for Humvees that provide the armor that keeps our troops safe in Iraq," said Cornyn.

Cornyn spoke with the Gazette from his Washington, D.C., office in a telephone interview after returning from overseas. While in Iraq, he visited troops and officials and then visited NATO headquarters in Belgium and attended Battle of the Bulge ceremonies.

"The work that Red River is doing is important to our war effort in Iraq," said Cornyn, calling it "critical protection."

He believes the U.S. planned for a decisive victory in Iraq but did not plan "for a broad insurgency," that has left U.S. forces open to attack at all points.

"Basically, here in Iraq you're potentially a target just about anywhere," he said.

Cornyn said Red River is working as fast as it can to produce the kits, noting that a U.S. general in Iraq told him those kits are preferable to having Humvees produced with the armor already in place.

"Obviously, there's more demand than there is supply right now but we're working just as fast as we can," Cornyn said. He said there's a moral obligation to make sure American troops have the equipment to do

their job.

Cornyn said he spent a day in Iraq and was able to meet with soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.

"I would say (of) all our troops you don't hear any complaining," he said. "They understand the importance of the mission ... and they are justly proud of what they're doing there."

With base closures looming, Cornyn believes Texas bases stand a chance at not only surviving but also picking up work.

"If we've learned anything here recently it is the important role Red River has in providing the protection we've discussed in terms of armor," he said, noting that U.S. troops are going through a lot of equipment because of the conditions-such as desert sand-in Iraq.

"We'll find out in May when the BRAC list comes out," Cornyn said. "I think Texas by and large will do very well. We're going to fight for all of our military installations."

He believes Texas has some factors going its way when it comes down to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process, including good weather and open spaces. Texas communities like the ones in East Texas are also very supportive of the military, Cornyn said.

With the possibility of troops being brought home from overseas possible during realignment and the state's military capacity, he believes Texas "can actually be a net winner in the BRAC process."

Cornyn will also join two committees for the 109th Congress. He has been tapped to join the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee and the Joint Economic Committee.

He already serves on the Armed Services, Judiciary and Budget committees.

"What we need to focus on is pro-growth strategies ... reasonable regulations and a common-sense approach to civil justice," said Cornyn. He said Congress should take a look at tort reform, which he believes will make the economy more competitive.

Washington Post
December 23, 2004

With Blighted Housing Sold, Last Residents Must Be Moved

By Susan Kinzie; Washington Post Staff Writer

Elected officials and St. Mary's County staffers gathered Monday in Lexington Park to celebrate the closing of a deal that has been years in the making: the sale of Lexington Manor.

County Commissioner Thomas A. Mattingly Sr. (D-Leonardtown) said recently that he has newspaper articles from decades ago suggesting that the county buy the property. "It looks like 25 years getting there, but we're finally getting there," he said.

The cinder block apartments, built as military housing, were sold and rented out and had badly deteriorated over the years. Now weeds grow on the roofs that gave the neighborhood its nickname -- the "Flattops" --

orange mesh is tacked over broken windows and a spray-painted warning commands people to KEEP OUT.

"That has been a blight on St. Mary's County for years," said commissioners President Thomas F. McKay (R-At Large). "At the same time, it's provided much-needed affordable housing."

So even as they closed the sale, they knew there was still work to be done -- all the people who were living in the Flattops had to be relocated, in a region where rents and mortgages keep rising.

On Monday, the county bought the property for \$6.5 million. After piles of paperwork and grant applications, only \$90,000 of that is local money.

That made for a little nervousness just before closing the deal Monday, McKay said. "We were waiting for a check from the state of Maryland -- it was supposed to be there at 10." They made a few cell phone calls. It showed up at 11 a.m.

The neighborhood comprised two parcels. The northern chunk of real estate cost \$3 million, and the southern part went for \$3.5 million.

The southern area, which is closest to Patuxent River Naval Air Station and lies in the flight path of the planes operating there, will be demolished first, perhaps as soon as this spring. It will become open space, perhaps a park. The northern piece, which was not as much of an encroachment on the **base**, could be leveled later next year or early in 2006. That land could be developed, but neither area will have homes.

"Today marks the culmination of something that this community needed to do to protect our economic engine," said Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.). "With more than 20,000 local jobs dependent on the ability of Pax River to continue attracting new work, this became for us an issue of remaining competitive. . . . This is one of many steps we are taking to be sure we are competitive for the upcoming BRAC [**base realignment** and **closure** process] that will begin in May."

Hoyer said an additional \$738,000 in federal funds will help with relocating the families living in the Flattops.

At a meeting last week, McKay, sitting in front of a row of poinsettias, said, "At holiday time it's so nice to see so many of those families who have transitioned to better housing."

Of more than 100 families living in Lexington Manor last year, fewer than 50 are left.

Lori Mellott is one of the last people in the southern section, and she is worried. "I talked to a relocation coordinator Friday. They still don't have anything for me," she said. The last thing they suggested was a \$1,200-a-month townhouse, she said, and while she has housing assistance of about \$700 a month, and the county has to cover the difference for several years, she knows she couldn't afford the place after that subsidy expires. Meanwhile, she knows, time is running out for her and her son to live there.

"It's really empty now," she said. "It looks lonely."

The Catholic Archdiocese of Washington has held monthly meetings for tenants, county staff members and others to try to ease the transition and help residents find places to go. But the chronic shortage of affordable housing in the area leaves them with few options.

"It hasn't been as hard as we anticipated it would be," McKay said. "That said, we still have 47 families to go. We'll see what the next year will bring."



AMERICAN FORCES INFORMATION SERVICE **NEWS ARTICLES**

Troop, Base Realignments Pressure Exchange Changes

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22, 2004 -- Projected negative economic impact accompanying future realignment of U.S. forces in Europe and elsewhere to stateside bases is a key reason why the military's exchange system needs to become more efficient, a senior DoD official looking into these issues said.

As part of troop-realignment plans, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld "is talking about bringing home 70,000 troops from Europe alone" and thousands more from Asia, retired Air Force Maj. Gen. C.J. Wax, head of the Unified Exchange Task Force, said during a recent interview. The task force was formed in May 2003 to effect change across the worldwide military exchange system.

Wax, a former commander of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, also noted that 3,700 troops and 10,000 family members now stationed in South Korea are returning to the United States.

Since the majority of exchange system profits -- 53 percent -- come from overseas store sales, the system must transform its business practices now to become more efficient to sustain the benefit for servicemembers, he said.

Upcoming 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission decisions "could be a two-edged sword," Wax said. Some underperforming stores could be closed, he said, while profitable stores could be shuttered, too.

In 2003 there were a total of 293 main military exchange stores in the United States and 153 overseas stores. The reason most overseas stores do well, he noted, is because they have a "unique market" of servicemembers and families who, for various reasons, don't often patronize host-country retail establishments.

Regarding stateside exchange operations, Wax noted that 63 percent of U.S.- based servicemembers and their families today don't reside on a military installation.

That means, "at least 63 percent of our people will end up living closer to commercial retail entities than they do to their (on-post) exchanges," he said.

This circumstance, Wax added, doesn't take the upcoming 2005 BRAC closure list into account.

And, as thousands of servicemembers are redeployed from overseas locales to posts like Fort Carson, Colo., and Fort Benning, Ga., Wax noted, those exchanges will likely require upgrades to

keep them competitive with off-post retailers.

At the same time, he said, profitable overseas exchanges will be closed as the U.S. military's global footprint changes to become more expeditionary and troops are deployed to rudimentary overseas base camps for training with allies.

Military exchanges at such camps, Wax noted, will be small in size and likely only carry the most basic of goods. And providing exchange services to U.S. forces deployed to Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, he noted, "is very expensive."

All of this "impacts the overall profit equation of our exchanges," Wax pointed out, and necessitates the need to lower costs across the system.

The military exchanges provide an important non-cash benefit to servicemembers, military retirees, and their families, Wax noted. Simply closing exchanges with scant profit isn't the answer, he explained, noting that many are located in isolated areas of the country, such as the Air Force base in Minot, N.D.

For military customers at Minot, Wax pointed out, the exchange store there "is it."

"How do you compensate servicemembers for denying them a benefit?" he asked. It would be akin to denying medical care to servicemembers stationed in North Dakota because such care is too expensive, he said.

The exchange system can't increase its customer base or build more stores to increase sales, Wax said. Therefore, he noted, the only thing to do is to become more efficient. "The exchanges must look at their internal operations for ways to reduce the cost of delivering the benefit," he said.

AAFES, with headquarters in Dallas; the Navy Exchange, with headquarters in Virginia Beach, Va.; and the Marine Corps Exchange, with headquarters in Quantico, Va., combine for more than \$10 billion in annual worldwide sales. Two-thirds of that money is earmarked to fund the services' morale, welfare and recreation programs, Wax pointed out. Protecting exchange profit margins, in turn, protects these MWR programs, he noted.

The task force initially thought to combine the services' separate exchange headquarters into one as part of proposed money-saving initiatives. That step, he said, probably won't be necessary. Instead, the organizations' finance and accounting, human resources, information technology, logistics and non-retail procurement systems will be consolidated to achieve savings. Private-sector retailers performed a series of similar mergers of business practices over the last decade, he observed.

Consolidation of business practices across the military exchange system as recommended by the exchange task force will make exchange operations more cost efficient and be transparent to customers, Wax said.

"Once costs go down, profits will likely go up," he noted.

Exchange system reorganization recommendations should be completed by March 2005, officials say. Following a legislative review cycle, measures to streamline exchanges could be implemented during 2006.